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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of adult basic education in Sweden, focusing on what types of adults take advantage of basic educational opportunities and when they do so. It includes two case studies, one of auxiliary nurses and one of factory workers, that describe what motivates these employees to take literacy education or further education courses and what courses they are likely to take. The paper concludes that, overall, adults are more likely to take advantage of educational opportunities when they are necessary to their lives at the moment and when they are made convenient, especially when they are conducted in the workplace during working hours. The document contains 43 references. (KC)

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WHO TAKES THE SECOND CHANCE ?

Implementing educational equality in adult basic education in a Swedish context.

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WHO TAKES THE SECOND CHANCE?

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INTRODUCTION.

Research findings are only ever about some fraction of a totality. When such findings are read they are always interpreted against some background, some context, which is based on both explicit knowledge that is thematized and assumptions that are taken for granted. It is therefore always difficult to interpret research findings. When the findings emanate from an alien context or a context that the reader has not experienced, there is a clear risk of not understanding the writers' message. It is our experience, in the area of adult education, that differences in systems, culture and history between countries contribute to this problem of international sharing of research findings. We will therefore start with a short overview of the context that constitutes the background to our results.

Participation in Swedish adult education.

According to rather detailed statistics, at least half of the Swedish adult population was involved in some kind of education or training in the year 1986 (SCB; 1988: the age-span 16 - 64 is the basis, except for *folk high schools (residential colleges)* and *study associations* where figures refer to all ages). The most important forms in terms of numbers of participants were the study circles which are organized by 11 nationwide study associations (28.4 % of the adult population participated) and training organized by employers (27.5 %). However, in most cases the number of hours spent in these ways were rather small; a study circle normally takes 20-30 hours spread over about 10 meetings and company-based training courses are seldom longer than one week.

Two other forms, *municipal adult education* (4.2 %) and *labour market training* (0.8 %) involve fewer people, but often in a more intensive degree, for instance half a year, or a year or more on a full-time basis. Administratively linked to municipal adult education is *adult literacy training* (0.4 %) which provides intensive training of basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. The higher education system also involves adults to some extent in "non-vocational" courses (1.6 %). Finally, 127 *folk*

high schools offer education on a full-time basis for one or several years (0.3%), as well as shorter courses (4.5 %).

There is no direct correspondence to what is normally defined as adult basic education (ABE) in North America. An aggregation of ABE -segments from the forms mentioned above would show that the number of participants in ABE is far less impressive than in others forms and levels of adult education. Only about 1.5 % of the work force participates in one or more ABE-style courses each year.

Women dominate in study associations (59% of the participants), in the longer courses at folk high schools (59%), in higher education "non-vocational" courses (60%), and in municipal adult education (64%). Men dominate in labour market training (61%) and in staff training (53%).

Altogether this constitutes a system that is rather complex ,and this is further complicated by the fact that each form has its own history, function, culture and goal.

Forms of adult education and their characteristics.

Study associations and folk high schools constitute popular education. Popular education is administratively independent from, but financially supported by, the state. Originally popular education was an integrated part of popular movements such as the labor unions, political parties, free churches, and consumers' or producers' cooperatives. It was organized to meet the needs of its members. Thus most units of popular education have some ideological or interest group commitment, with the exception of some folk high schools that are governed by the county councils.

The first folk high schools were founded in the late 19th century, with the main purpose of educating farmers for their growing role in local political life. At the beginning of this century the popular movements started to found their own folk high schools to train their members; since then this form has grown and has had varying functions. Notwithstanding these changes, the folk high schools have maintained their focus on developing personality and citizenship.

The first study associations were formed at the beginning of this century, and were connected to the workers' movement and the temperance movement. Their purpose was to provide a kind of supplementary counter-edu-

cation for working class youth. Formal education beyond compulsory school recruited children almost exclusively from the middle and upper classes and was adapted to the needs and values of these classes. Later, study associations were formed on the basis of other interests or ideologies such as the free-churches, the farmers, the white collar workers and even the state-church. The most recent was formed only a few years ago by what is known as the sports-movement.

The character of counter-education has faded and nowadays the study associations have developed into rather independent institutions (Arvidsson, 1985, 1989).The ties to the founding organizations and their ideologies has become less and less important over the years and in many respects the study organizations have developed into market-oriented institutions with rather loose ties to certain interest-groups. Most study circle participants are probably unaware of the ideological roots of the association organizing the course. However, the study circles still serve the lesser educated to a degree that can only be explained by their unique relation to the popular movements. Taking part in one or two study circles a year is part of the way of life in large segments of the population, especially in the country. Participants in study circles pay a small fee but the larger part of the cost is met by the state and the local municipality.

In sharp contrast to popular education in terms of objectives, target groups and financing stands the rapidly expanding company-based training. Corporate training programmes are initiated by the employers and are looked upon as a kind of investment. Basic training is considered by the employers to be a responsibility of the state as is the question of educational equality. This view is not shared by the labour unions, which are very strong in Sweden, and in the last few years the unions have acted to change the nature and distribution of company-based training.

Inspired by proposals from the labor unions, the Social Democrat government decided to establish what are known as "renewal funds". All companies were compelled to put 10% of their profit for the year 1985 into these funds and were then allowed to use their contributions over a 5-year period for the purposes of training, and research and development. The proposals for using these resources had to be acceptable to the dominant union in each company. It was stipulated by the government that a considerable part of the money spent on training should be devoted to basic training for em-

ployees with only a few years of formal schooling. About one billion dollars were put into the funds, which should be compared with the 20 billion dollars that is the estimated cost of company-based training over the same 5-year period.

This year, 1989, the two main unions have formulated policies on corporate training (LO, 1989, TCO, 1988) with the aim of steering it to some extent towards the interests of their members. The blue collar workers union, LO, with 2.2 million members has called for a more equal distribution of the resources spent on company training. They demand a minimum of two weeks training for each employee every year and the right for employees with less than 10 years schooling to receive supplementary education up to that level. (For further details, see p. 13) The TCO, which organizes most of the white collar workers and has 1.1 million members, has put forward similar demands.The unions' interest in company-based training is linked to their efforts to change the organization and conditions of work to be less harmful to health and personal development. The radical nature of these proposals can be illustrated by the fact that only 2 % of employees with less than 9 years schooling received more than one week of company-based training during the first six months of 1986 although about 25% of the employees have spent less than 9 years in school.

Corporate interests also coordinate their action in formulating educational policies. One document which illustrates this is a newly published report from The European Round Table of Industrialists (1989) that presents a strategy to make education on all levels fit their interests.

Labour market training has its roots in the early post-war period (Ellström, 1989). It has been, and still is, a very important instrument in the implementation of the general labour market policy which has been a main concern of the Social Democratic Party ever since it started its long government career in the early thirties. Labour market training enabled those who lost their jobs because of changes in the structure of industry and agriculture to be retrained. Industry, which was advancing progressively, was provided with a labour force with up-dated competence. Through an internationally unique labour exchange organization, employers and individuals seeking new employment were helped to find each other.The structural change was speeded up and facilitated by LO's wage-policy, implemented under the name "Solidary wage-policy". Only those companies

who were able to pay the wages negotiated by the central committees of LO and the employers' central organization , SAF, could survive.

The level of unemployment has not exceeded 4 % since the Second World War. At present the unemployment figure is between 1 and 2 % which should be compared with an unemployment rate of around 10 % in most European countries.

Labour market training is allocated by labour exchange agencies; it is is not open for simply anyone to apply for. All costs are paid by the state and the participant gets an "income" which corresponds roughly to 90 % of his average income before he lost his job.

Municipal adult education provides training of which most is equivalent to that provided within the secondary school system. It is governed by the local authorities but steered by a national policy through a national curriculum with general aims as well as a specification of frames and content in each course (Fransson, 1989). This form of education was given a coherent character as a result of a bill passed in 1967, but it has its roots in courses for adults who wanted to qualify for entrance to the universities. This function still remains but is now overshadowed by other programmes on lower levels.

A substantial part of the municipal adult education is concerned with education at the lower secondary school level. Priority is given to adults with only a few years of schooling and in a difficult social situation. There is a financial support system which makes it possible for members of this group to take full-time programmes for one or two years, or sometimes more. The courses are organized in a system of stages and each student can devise an individual programme of theoretical and vocational courses. All courses are free of charge and are open to everyone.

Adult literacy training is administratively part of municipal adult education, but it has its own system. It was established in the seventies and gives training in basic skills for people with severe difficulties in writing, reading and mathematics. More than half of the participants are immigrants. Participants with a Swedish background often have a history of school failure, unemployment or other social problems. Adult literary training is sometimes included as a part of a full-time treatment programme organized by one of the social agencies.

Instruction in literacy is free for all adults who are considered to need training on this level. Employed participants get a grant to cover the major part of their income loss when they go to class.

Official goals for adult education in Sweden.

Four goals for all state-financed adult education were gradually formulated between 1967 and 1975 in a series of government bills, and these still apply as general goals today. They are equality, democracy, economic growth, and the satisfaction of individual preferences (Broström & Ekeroth, 1977). The goal of equality forms the general background for this paper.

The equality goal was introduced into official documents in the early seventies as a result of pressure from the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions and the Workers' Educational Association (Broström & Ekeroth, 1977). As a consequence of this, the allocation of resources was changed in favour of education for people with least education.

Another important decision for the enhancement of adult education was The Educational Leave Act 1976. This guarantees all employees the right to take leave for study purposes without losing their job, The Employment Security Act of 1974 having already given most employees security of tenure.

A new system for financial aid was established in 1975, which enabled grants and loans to be distributed through the state in accordance with the equality goal. The most important aspect of this was that grants were made available which opened the possibility of full-time study to a number of formerly excluded groups. Priority is given to persons with little education, difficult social situations and work that is tough and monotonous. In 1987/88 around 18 500 persons had grants of this type.

The financing of participation in labor market training has already been mentioned. Most of this training is localized to special vocational training centers. In some cases those who are unemployed, or those who must leave their job and be retrained because of illness or for other reasons, are given labour market grants for basic training at the lower secondary school level or sometimes at the higher level at a municipal education center. Finally, there is a grant and loan system available for all adults on the same conditions as for students in higher education.

Recruitment for equality.

The fulfillment of the equality goal entails problems. One problem is that of recruiting the target groups. In order to decrease the educational gap recruitment must be actively aimed at the target groups; otherwise adult education will produce a still larger gap, which is what has actually happened up to now.

One of the reasons for this is the limited financial resources available for instruction and study aid. The different grant and loan systems mentioned above are helpful for only rather a small fraction of the large numbers who need basic adult education. Basically, the financial problem is one of both the number of available grants and the amount of the grants.

Another problem has to do with how adult education is conceived of by the target groups. Furthermore, it has to do with how adult education institutions act to promote the recruitment. In this article we will deal with these two problems. We will present some results from two research projects, one on how unskilled workers conceive of education and one on how different educational institutions act to meet unskilled workers' perspectives and needs.

UNSKILLED WORKERS' VIEWS OF EDUCATION

Through a series of in-depth interviews with unskilled workers from different settings we have tried to understand how persons with few years of school education and who work in jobs with low competence requirements look upon education and what they see it as taking for them to start studying again as adults. The interview records are supplemented by descriptions of the workers in their work situation and a questionnaire which was sent to a representative sample. The descriptions give a different perspective on interests and motives and actions compared with the questionnaires - a situational understanding rather than an explanation (von Wright, 1971). Our methodological approach is qualitative analysis, which means dealing with qualitative rather than quantitative differences. Methodological questions are not dealt with further in this paper.

The research project altogether comprised five case-studies in five branches: dairy workers, auxiliary nurses, textile workers, factory storemen and unskilled mechanics. Data consists of 194 interviews together with

descriptive material concerning the working process. All case-studies have been reported in Swedish (Alexandersson & Larsson, 1982; Helmstad, 1983; SÖ 1984; Larsson & Thång, 1985; Helmstad & Larsson, 1985, Alexandersson & Thång, 1988). In addition to this, 42 training officers were interviewed about the training of unskilled workers from their perspective.

An attempt to integrate the studies resulted in a monograph (Larsson et al., 1986). The results are also reported in two papers in English. (Larsson, 1985, Larsson, 1987). The Swedish studies have been followed up and elaborated in Canada by Stalker Costin (Larsson & Stalker Costin, 1988, Stalker Costin, 1989) and in New Zealand by Benseman (1989).

In this article we will first discuss some observations from two of the cases, auxiliary nurses and factory storemen.

The situational character of educational interest among auxiliary nurses.

Thirty-five auxiliary nurses working in the same hospital were interviewed. We found that educational plans and ambitions in this group had five different roots: 1) a long-term plan, 2) a crisis situation, 3) a latent interest that was realized because of a convenient offer, 4) a feeling of threat, that their situation in work would deteriorate if they did not participate in education/training, and 5) that they were forced (as an order) to participate (Larsson & Thång, 1985).

1. Long-term plan.

Education or training is wanted as a part of a long-term plan. Persons express this by applying for education, using semi-relevant education or strategically choosing jobs to reach a specific aim (to fulfil a dream). The following résumé of an interview illustrates this category:

> "Lisa has always had the same goal which she tried to attain untiringly: to be able to work as an occupational therapist. She views this as something she inherited from her father, a tradition she wants to fulfil, an attempt to do what she has learnt from her father. She wants to teach others to work with their hands. This has led her to take several courses in handicraft offered by popular education and municipal adult education. She has also spent time in a folk high school. She views her present work as an auxiliary nurse as a practical experience

> and a training in preparation for training to become an occupational therapist or an assistant occupational therapist."

5 out of 35 persons could be characterized in this category

2. Crisis.

The present situation is experienced as problematic, or more severely, as a crisis. All avenues for development as a person are blocked. Divorce or personal loss has led to thoughts of starting a new life. Education might be considered as a possible solution. This is typically a situation of limited duration. The following résumé presents one case:

> "Lillemor had always dreamt of spending some time in a folk high school. During a personal crisis she realized this ambition. She explains why she started folk high school thus: Well, there were many things. On the one hand I got divorced, on the other hand there were a lot of problems at my work-place. It was a matter of personal development, where I wanted to get away from my former life and the problems at work. We had had a year that was very difficult at work."

There were 6 persons that fitted this category .

3.Latent educational interest.

When education/training is offered as a part of everyday life, it sometimes happens that an unexpectedly large number of people turn out to be interested. It might be vocationally related training or general education that is offered in the work-place. A characteristic trait here is that many of these have never tried to participate in studies individually through the "open market". Two aspects seem to be important for their new interest in education: a practical/economic and a social-psychological aspect. The first is about convenience in time and space but also about the absence of costs. The second aspect has to do with education or training as a part of the collective's normal activities, or, in other words, doing what is expected of a member of a collective that the person identifies with. Here is an illustration.

> "Britt is among the auxiliary nurses who have been accepted as students on the first course in the hospital's own training of assistant

> nurses. (There have been such courses available for a long time, but not in this hospital). She has never thought about studying as an adult before, nor about becoming an assistant nurse. She has only attended some courses on macrame and weaving. She does not know anyone who has studied as an adult. The most important motives for applying for the assistant nurse course was that it was given in her home district, that it is short and that it is paid. During her studies a lot has changed for her. She thinks about education generally in an altogether different way than before. She has found new friends, learned a lot and found out that studying is pleasant."

There were 14 persons that could be placed in this category. The general background to our findings here was that a new offer was made for auxiliary nurses to train to become assistant nurses in the hospital. Almost all applied for this course.

4. A perceived threat.

Education or training is accepted because a threat is felt, that status or opportunities will otherwise be lost. A condition is that the threat is close and concrete and that training or education is perceived to be a solution. (A more abstract threat - bad prospects in general for a certain occupational group - does not motivate many in Sweden to start studying because labour market training is relied on as a rescuer from such unemployment). One can say that in this case there is no genuine interest in education. An illustration:

> "Anna has never planned to participate in any kind of adult education. She has attended some popular education courses (English, child psychology). It is difficult to follow courses since she has night work. She applied for the assistant nurse course because it was decided that those who work nights must be qualified as assistant nurses. She might as well do it now, before she gets too old. She has not felt any lack of education in her job, but it can be a good thing to have followed the course. She would not have applied for it on her own initiative. Then she thinks that 6 months is not very long - she must be able to manage that."

There were 6 persons who were considered to belong to this group.

5.Coercion.

Some persons do not want to accept training/education of longer duration, unless they are ordered to do it:

> "Karin had 8 years of elementary school and took an auxiliary nurse course in 1975. She has never thought about adult education. It is enough, as it is. The auxiliary nurse course for 6 weeks was the maximum that she could stand. The only course she has attended was last winter when she joined her husband in a course in marketing. He has a business, so they thought they should go. She did not attend on a lot of occasions. Otherwise she thinks that it is 'deadly boring' to study. Karin has not applied for the course to be an assistant nurse. 'If they order me I will do it, it is the only possibility. Not otherwise. I don't like studying.'"

There were 2 persons in this category.

Discussion.

The difference between the first three categories and the last two might be described in terms of a distinction between education and schooling. In the last two categories the situation is one where the persons would rather have been doing something else - they have a purely external relation to the studies, while in the first three there is a genuine interest - they are not alienated from the learning task. In the discussion below we concentrate on the first three categories.

The first category is one that has been traditionally looked upon as typical of the target group, at least for formal adult education. In the establishment of municipal adult education, in 1967, the target group was the "reserve of talent" . This is a group of students that are searching for and using educational facilities even if they are not easily accessible. It is a group of people that are not alien to the world of education and/or have a purpose that is not acute. In short, this is a group of people who are actually using adult education to a great extent.

The second group is more a "fragile" group; a person in this life situation is open to different alternatives, education being only one of them. The high interest in education is temporary and often fades away as life changes,

as the "crisis situation" is solved in some way. Several researchers have pointed to the importance of life transitions, such as Cross (1981, in her COR model the variable D), Johansson & Ekerwald (1976), and Aslanian & Brickell (1980, referred to in Cross,1981).

In connection with the third category it might be said that "a latent interest" is less clearly acknowledged in adult education research, the reason probably being that this interest causes manifest action only under very special circumstances. For example, these circumstances might involve a change in the conditions on which a course is given, from a "normal" situation to a more attractive offer. Our auxiliary nurses were exposed to such an attractive offer and the effects were striking. Other examples are given in the concluding section of this paper.

Potential for recruitment.

There are not many people like those in the first category, who have only a few years of formal schooling but have long-term plans for getting an education. A recruitment strategy that is adapted to the needs and habits of this group is simple but will reach very few. Sooner or later adult education will find that it is hard to find enough students to start long courses in basic subjects like mathematics, English, Swedish and civics. This is exactly what has happened in Sweden during the eighties.

A more active strategy is needed to capture the sudden openness to education experienced by persons in a crisis situation, those identified by the second category. Unless a proper educational alternative is found while the heat is on other solutions are chosen. In Sweden a number of preparatory courses have been developed which make it possible to start studying with very short delay. Instead of waiting for a regular course to start, would-be students are offered the chance to try different subjects and to discuss their future as students with a counsellor.

People in the third category, those with a latent interest in education, are, however, seldom reached. To exploit this great potential, it seems that adult education needs to be integrated into people´s everyday lives.

To a great extent people live with and relate to others with the same educational background, even though cross-class families are not uncommon - 43 % according to a Swedish study (Lundequist & Nyberg, 1987, reported in

Petersson et al., 1989). The level of formal education is an important selection factor on the labour market. Thus people working together tend to have about the same educational background and ambitions. In groups where those with little education are in the majority, education is often looked upon as something for "others" outside the group. For a person in such a situation, to get involved in adult education is to take a far-reaching step. It is a step with great consequences, since it requires the person to leave a familiar context of relations with vague prospects for the future. It means leaving the "normal" life; doing something that should not be done when seen from the perspective of the current environment. It might even be looked upon as a form of betrayal (see Willis, 1979) and a person daring to apply for a course in adult basic education may be ostracized by his comrades. Instead of supporting his ambitions they may try to correct his deviant behavior. In a sense, entering long-term studies means rejecting the life-style and culture of a group where the reading of books is a very rare activity, so the negative reaction from comrades is easily understood.

For people with more than compulsory education the situation is quite different; life-long education is often part of their jobs and their life-styles.To take up adult education is to return to a familiar environment. It does not normally mean anything negative for relations with important persons - you are not leaving your group. Instead, there is compliance with widespread expectations and social norms. Thus the social distance to adult education is small. Geographical distance and economic conditions are not obstacles of great importance, since people with higher education usually have more money, especially when it comes to savings.

Thus if we return to the implementation of a recruitment policy governed by an equality aim, the relation of adult education to the every-day life of those with little education has to be considered. The equality aim has implications also for curriculum, but we will not elaborate on that problem here.

From the perspective of closeness to everyday life, different forms of adult education in Sweden differ considerably. It is study associations that traditionally have the closest relation to the everyday life of those with low education. First, the labour unions have a legal right to have study organizers at every work place, paid by the employers. The study organizers have the right to walk round and talk to his fellow employees about educational possibilities. In most cases the study organizers recruit students to study circles

or courses organized by the unions. Second, in many places taking part in the activities of the study associations is a part of the local social life; this is especially the case in the country and small towns. In many cases ordinary life and study circles are integrated for poorly educated people. Thus the study associations' recruitment problem does not basically reside here, but rather in the perceived meaning of education (we will return to that later). However, as has already been mentioned, study circle courses are relatively short.

Labour market training may be close to many of the poorly educated but that closeness is irrelevant here because people do not have the opportunity to apply for such courses. Remission to LMT occurs in cases of unemployment or serious risk of unemployment in the near future.

When it comes to the other forms of adult education that offer courses of longer duration, namely municipal adult education and the folk high schools, the distance to the everyday life of the poorly educated is obvious. They entail visiting an unfamiliar environment - a school or a residential college in the country - where people with a different background will be met and where the content and forms of work are very different from those encountered in an ordinary job.

Company-based training for the poorly educated - a narrow gate.

Another problem that is relevant in this context is the generally narrow view held by most employers on the function of company-based training. In the research project referred to above, (Larsson et al. 1986), 44 training officers were interviewed about their view on the training and education of unskilled workers. An extremely instrumental attitude was found: training on the job should be kept at a minimum level. Unskilled workers seldom need any training to perform their work tasks and should not be offered unnecessary courses. It was not considered in the interest of the employer to spend money on educational efforts to raise the general level of the basic competence of unskilled workers.

When it came to the organization of work, there had been very few attempts to elaborate work-tasks; reported changes were at the level of rotating the existing tasks. This is in line with reports, for instance from Moxnes (1984), that widespread talk about enlarged jobs has nevertheless resulted in only minor changes. Our empirical findings on the views of training of-

ficers are based on interviews done in 1984 and 1985. One sign that it is still valid is that the head of company training at Volvo (the biggest work-place in Sweden) confirmed it in 1989, by pointing out that decisions on training for workers are decentralized in the sense that local managers, at a lower level, decide on those matters. She points out that these managers are steered by measures of productivity and that training and similar activities serve to decrease productivity according to those measures (Keen, 1989). This way of measuring is only applied on workers.

It is always hard to predict the future pattern of qualification requirements in the labour market. German researchers on qualification requirements in working life (for instance Kern and Schumann) now seem to have left the hypothesis of a polarization in the labour force. That hypothesis meant raising qualification requirements at higher levels and decreasing the demand at lower levels. Instead, those researchers now expect increased requirements for almost all, and unemployment for those who cannot meet the requirements; in other words, the tasks for which little knowledge is required are expected to disappear. (Aronsson, 1983; Broady, 1986; Rajan, 1989)

There are indications that this latter pattern is reasonably valid for Sweden's contemporary working-life as well. One thing is that the proportion of white collar workers in industry is constantly growing; it is now more than 30 %. The union for white collar workers has experienced very rapid growth, while the blue collar workers union is stagnating. (It might be notes that almost all employees are members of a union). The change in the organization of work is constantly making white collar workers out of blue collar workers. This seems to be a rise in the qualification requirements, at least at a very crude level. On the other hand, we concluded from our investigations of the unskilled workers' work-tasks that it is difficult to imagine a decrease in the qualification requirements, since most work-tasks are so in lacking in complexity that there is nowhere to go to reach a less qualified level. There remain a lot of loose ends in this that cannot be dealt with here.

In any case, the employers' reported perspective leads to an increase in the gaps in knowledge between those with a long education and those with a short education - the differences in schooling is added to after school. If the qualification researchers are correct, there are not only problems from the

perspective of equality, but also problems for unskilled workers trying to get jobs in the future. In conclusion, other interests will have to intervene if poorly educated people are going to get more training in the work-place.

Such an interest has in fact made a move. As was mentioned at the start of this paper, the two largest unions in Sweden have recently independently published pamphlets where they put forward and discuss concrete ideas on how to organize adult education related to the work-place. The LO makes two main proposals:

1. All workers should be given the right to receive a certain "renewal of their work-competence". It should be an "individual right" entailing at least two weeks a year. The employee should have the right to save training weeks over the years to a make up a longer training period.

2.Every worker who lacks a basic competence equivalent to comprehensive compulsory school or the lowers levels of upper secondary school in the subjects Swedish, mathematics, English and civics should have the right to acquire that competence, in work-time and without losing job benefits. The realization of this part requires legislation by Parliament. The LO has estimated that the number of hours needed to reach the intended level of competence is 1400 hours per person, or the equivalent of 175 working days. About 25% of the work force (more than one million workers) belongs to the target group of this gigantic educational effort. In order to finance the reform it is proposed that the employers should contribute a proportion of the total wage outlay.This money should be handled by a funding body in which all major parts of the labour market are represented. It is proposed that the state should contribute a sum equivalent to what is spent in ordinary schools for the same amount of teaching.

A question that is too rarely discussed, at least in Sweden, concerns the content of education and training. Sköld and Stockfelt (1981) have discussed learning, primarily in work-life, as positive or negative in relation to the workers' personal development and as an agent for social change. From this perspective company training can be positive but also negative. The work as such can be positive as well as negative from a learning aspect; it can make people adapt to conditions that are negative for the health, identity etc. It can also be positive through developing skills, knowledge and identity. In fact the importance of work as content is often overlooked, even looked upon as irrelevant. Ginner (1988) has investigated the

Workers Educational Association's view of education during the post-war period. He found a Neo-humanistic view competing with a Citizen education view, but he found almost no traces of a Polytechnic view, which would stress work and the development of workers' "know-how" in all aspects of their work.

Training on the job is very limited for most unskilled workers, that is clear from recent surveys (SCB; 1988). Many jobs are even composed in such a way that there is a "competence ceiling" (Larsson et al., 1986). The necessary competence to perform the tasks adequately is learned in a few hours. Once that level of competence is reached additional experience or problem-solving efforts add nothing to the quality or quantity of the performance.To develop broader perspectives these unskilled workers need education that is relevant to other contexts of life, not only work-life but also social life and their life as a citizen, as someone who can produce and reproduce culture.

How storemen perceive the meaning of education .

As was touched upon earlier, one of the main difficulties in getting the poorly educated involved in adult education has to do with how they perceive adult education. It is a problem that has to do with the meaning of education.

In another of our case-studies, the one about storemen (Helmstad & Larsson,1985, Larsson & Helmstad, 1985), we concentrated on this aspect. We made an effort to relate conceptions of the use of education to the storemen's actual work-tasks, as they could be analyzed through observation. Our analysis was based on interviews with 43 storemen at the same work-place, where 600 worked in all.

Two different views of education and training were identified: one restricted and one more wide. Thirty storemen were classified as being in the restricted category and eleven in the wide one. Two could not be classified.

The restricted view.

The restricted view is one where education is exclusively related to a concrete use. Education or training (there is not a clear distinction in Swedish between those concepts in everyday language) is something that can be used in a new job or in new work-tasks. Study-circles are looked upon only as preparation for special functions in the union. There follows an illustrative quotation:

The interviewee has declared that education is a good thing:

> Question: "Why do you think education is important?"
>
> Answer:"Well, I think it will lead to better jobs, I suppose, That's what you hope when you get an education. I suppose it must be so."
>
> Question:"Do you think it can mean something more, apart from getting a better job?"
>
> Answer: "Of course it can... If you get an education to be something, then it is something you want to do and then it will perhaps be more fun to work with that. You will perhaps be more content with your work-place."

and later:

Question: "If someone who has only seven years of school and then takes courses to bring this up to comprehensive compulsory school level (nine years), and then returns to his or her old job, is that meaningful?

> Answer: "I don't know. Is there any use in that, really? Maybe, I don't know."

Stalker Costin (1989) uses conceptions in her study that are more specific.Three of those concerning the uses of participation in adult education could be considered as restricted: one that refers to practical application, one to credibility for the work-place and one where adult education is used to allocate status. Benseman (1989) found one conception that referred to "get on" in life and "better themselves" in their jobs and social standing, one where adult education was viewed as the key to better jobs and life-styles, and one where it was synonymous with schooling.

The wider view.

In the wider view, education is seen as something that can have multiple effects: immediate usefulness at work but also personal development and a richer life. Out of eleven persons in this category five make reference to cognitive development in some sense, while five others refer to a social dimension, that confidence grows and relations changes. One person emphasizes the political value of education in that history teaches how to relate to society. A quotation :

> Question: "Yes, do you think it (school), was meaningful?"
>
> Answer: "Yes, absolutely."
>
> Question: "In what sense?"
>
> Answer: "It has broadened my perspective."
>
> Question: "In what way?"
>
> Answer: "Yes, both cognitively, in the way you think simply, and in relations to other people."
>
> Question: "Education has an important function, then?"
>
> Answer: "Yes, it has. Because a lot of people you meet have had an education and as a rule that has changed them in some way. They have other interests and a different view on life ... from someone who leaves school after 9th grade and starts working at a job like this."

Stalker Costin reports one conception where she refers to adult education as a personal possession and Benseman reports one where it provides a broader perspective and deeper understanding of all aspects of life.

In the Swedish study we checked the educational background simply measured by number of years spent in school.

The number of years in school turned out to be systematically related to view on education:

	mean	s.d.	Md
A restricted view	9,5	1,4	9,0
A wider view	11,9	2,5	12,0

A simple way to understand this result is to look upon the difference in views as a consequence of the amount of experience, and maybe also of quality. In the latter case one can argue that those who have more education also have a more positive experience. The general argument here is that a longer acquaintance with something will result in more elaborated views of that something. Säljö(1979) has also reported similar changes in the view of education as a result of amount of schooling.

Conclusions

The different views can also be used to discuss the meaning of different kinds of education/training as they are conceived by different groups. In the more restricted view, education is related to concrete tasks in some sense, which would mean that education/training is considered worthwhile only if that relation is obvious. When it comes to the possibility of changing job (where training/education could be a concrete means), there was a difference between young workers and those over 30. In almost all cases, those over 30 thought they were too old to engage in education for this reason. Many also thought that they could not afford it, in which respect they differ from the auxiliary nurses; this difference might be explained by the fact that the nurses did not normally work full-time, whereas the storemen did and this makes a great difference from the perspective of family economy.

The reasoning above leads us to the conclusion that, if we try to view education with the eyes of those with a restricted perspective, and also take their life-situation into account, adult education does not often appear to be meaningful.

This is a perspective that takes a "subjective rationality" as the logic of reasoning. In a wide sense the reasoning is based on the assumption that the in-

terpretation of reality is the basis for action (as would be the expression of a symbolic interactionist), or that the phenomenon as it appears to someone is constituting the world in which we act (as it would be expressed from a phenomenologist's point of view).

The weaknesses of this perspective in this case is twofold. First, there are alternative views to consider, for instance behaviorist or freudian views on human action (behavior), which complicate the relation between the way in which the world is conceived and action. Second, there is the contextual problem; people tend to change conceptions as the context changes, and thus the context of the interview and its characteristics are important. In our case the interviews were done at the storemen's place of work.The results might have been different in a school context, just as they could have been different if another storeman had done the interviewing, and so on. Results must therefore be used with care.

Observation of the action as such as an alternative to interviews is not a very impressive one. To observe action is not a wise strategy when one tries to understand why people do not do something!

Life-situations that are important.

If we return to the problem of recruitment, the restricted view of the poorly educated becomes vital in two respects.

First, it is a general problem for those who try to motivate them to get an education. Experience from study organizers shows that a close relation does not solve the problem of how education is conceived - a change of view seems only to result from positive experiences.

Second, it points to the importance of the life-situations of the poorly educated. Changes in their situations will make training/education meaningful to some extent. Such changes might be related to work, but also to activities as citizens or to cultural activities. Education may become a part of a general activity pattern and given meaning by these activities.

The rising qualification requirements in the world of work was discussed earlier and we concluded that they are increasing generally with unemployment facing those that cannot meet them.

A representative sample have been asked about a number of non-work activities in 1968,1974, 1981 and 1987 (Pettersson et al, 1989). The conclusion is that the level of activity is increasing in almost all fields of interest (reading books, going to restaurants, gardening, fishing etc). The differences between different social groups have not been analyzed.

Finally, activities in the area of informal work must be considered with respect to the time left for education during leisure time. There has been dramatic changes as a consequence of women's rapid entrance into the formal work sector during the post-war period. This is quite an unknown field. However, it is clear that in Sweden the amount of formal and informal work is very large in the age-groups when children are typically being reared - the ages 20 - 50 and especially for women - while the amount is lower before and after those ages. This puts a strong limit on participation in activities outside work hours, such as education.

INVOLVING UNSKILLED WORKERS IN PRACTICE.

In this concluding section we will present some observations from a project in progress (PRI-KOM), where we are trying to identify successful strategies for recruiting persons with fewer years of education. We have focused on municipal adult education which is the main organization to provide such programmes.

The results will be discussed in relation to the first three categories on the situational character of educational interest among auxiliary nurses.

1. Organizing programmes for well-motivated persons

Municipal adult education was established to meet the educational needs of those who lacked formal requirements for admittance at the university. In the beginning only courses at upper-secondary school level were organized. No recruitment efforts beside information material and advertisements were needed. The objectives for municipal adult education were successively changed. The aim of educational equality was stressed and a course system at lower secondary level was created.

The response was unexpectedly strong and regulations for admittance were introduced: only those lacking nine-years of compulsory education were accepted. The reason for this restriction was that many applied for lower

secondary level courses to improve their grades and so enhance their chances in the competition for attractive programmes at secondary school level. The restrictions led to a decrease in student numbers in spite of large outreach programmes where different strategies for finding and motivating the poorly educated were tested. This reform period, which took place in the first half of the seventies, concluded with the introduction of a very ambitious study support system and an Educational Leave Act.

In spite of these very important reforms that made it possible for large numbers of workers to leave their jobs for full-time studies, the number of applicants for basic adult education has continuously decreased. Well motivated persons with long-term educational plans are very rare among the applicants nowadays and some school-leaders feel that programmes at this level will soon be history. At the same time, there are about one million in the work force who have less than nine years of basic schooling !

2. Meeting educational needs of persons in crisis.

A growing number of students in basic adult education try education as a way of changing their life situation. Most of them are women with monotonous and low paid jobs. They have reached a position where they feel that they have to make a last try to do something about their life or resign. Their self-confidence is low and they doubt their aptitude. Their main ambition is not to reach or achieve something, and thus they have problems in expressing detailed wishes and plans.

In a growing number of municipal educational centers systems of preparatory guidance courses 4 - 8 weeks long have been developed to meet the needs of this group. One good example is found in Gävle, a town with about 80 000 inhabitants.

The present preparatory courses (PC) are the result of ten years developmental work where course content, forms of work and study support systems have gradually evolved. The PC is eight weeks long and comprises 165 lessons. The students take subjects like English, mathematics, natural sciences, civics and Swedish. They have regular guidance sessions both individually and in groups. Emphasis is put on stimulating participants (the terms used for the students) to formulate problems for small projects. A new PC is started every four weeks and new-comers meet the "veterans". All teachers in the unit are involved in teaching at the PC and service on this

course is even regarded as a kind of in-service training where teachers have good opportunities for learning about the educational needs of these student.

About two thirds of the participants in PC continue to full time studies at the lower secondary level programme and constitute half the total number of participants in these courses. Improved self-confidence and elaborated educational plans are some of the main results of PC.

3. Making latent educational interest manifest.

We have already mentioned the establishment of "renewal funds" in 1985. In some companies the labour unions have convinced the employers to use part of this money for basic adult education for poorly educated employees. Resistance to this idea has been widespread and strong; it seems to have been broken only where the unions are strong and conscious of the value of basic education, and where the employers generally put a high value on education.

One of the cases where these preconditions were filled were in a lorry-factory in Gothenburg. A special study has been made of the programme for adult basic education developed at that factory (VLAB).

An inventory, carried out by the union, showed that 1400 out of 4220 employees belonged to the target group for adult basic education; 777 persons had less than nine years of schooling. Most of the employees are men.

The equivalent of about five million dollars was devoted to a programme for offering persons in the target group one or more courses at lower secondary school level. The courses could be taken in working hours without loss of job benefits. The courses lasted for about six months with about four lectures concentrated to half a day each week. Classrooms at or near the factory were used.

All persons in the target groups were contacted individually by representatives from the company and from the union. They were offered courses in Swedish, English, mathematics and computer usage.

After two and a half years 230 persons have participated in one or more courses. A drop-out of 10 % is reported. Drop-outs had generally had expected the reading load to be so great. The outreach programme at the fac-

tory has systematically taken one department after the other. Participants have had the chance to study together with their friends and colleagues, during working hours and in close connection to the factory. The teachers have made efforts to collect examples for instruction from the participants' working life.

An evaluation is presently being carried out. One unexpected result observed is that level of absenteeism in the departments sending participants to the programmes has decreased considerably, morale and work satisfaction are reported to have improved. The production rates have been kept in spite of absence for studies.The evaluators explain this as being a result of the favorable attitude of employees to the study possibilities offered. A latent educational interest has become manifest.

One more example will be mentioned. In the paper-mill of Ortviken near Sundsvall in central Sweden the local union got the equivalent of $30 000 from the renewal funds to carry out an investigation of educational needs and interests among all blue-collar workers at the mill. All but 25 of 686 employees were interviewed for 15-60 minutes. The interviews were carried out in cooperation between the union and a teacher from the municipal adult education center i Sundsvall.

Almost everyone stated educational interests, 133 wanted to take basic courses in Swedish and 207 in mathematics.

In the next phase of the inventory all those who were interested in courses in Swedish were tested and 63 - all men - were considered to be in need of a basic literacy course. They were offered daytime studies three times a week, a room in the papermill was to be used as classroom.

All 63 accepted the offer. They have now completed a full year of the literacy course and no drop-outs have been reported.

It is too early to draw conclusions from the limited number of cases of work-place education in basic adult education but the success in reaching men with low level of competence in basic subjects is noteworthy. Municipal adult education has up to now almost completely failed to recruit persons from this group to adult basic education.

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